## Testimony of Julie Clark supporting
## SB487 An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlan, members of the Finance Committee, my name is Julie Clark, I live in Clinton, CT and I own and operate CAST Preschool and Childcare Center in Woodbury, CT. which I began as a single mother with 2 small children.  We opened with an enrollment of 5 children and today we care for and educate approximately 150 children from Woodbury and surrounding towns.  In all of the 30+ years that I have been in business I have never seen such a dire situation affecting parents, children and caregivers.

The biggest problem that we face is a lack of qualified teachers who are willing to work for the meager wages that childcare businesses can afford to pay.  Without teachers, we cannot offer childcare spots to families who need them.  We cannot ask parents to pay the difference, as parents are already burdened with costs that can equal that of a college tuition.  The clear fact is that the expense of running a quality childcare program is more than what parents can afford to pay. The largest immediate need is in the area of infant/toddler childcare.  In these rooms, the ratio is one to four.  These "under 3" spots cause a financial drain on a childcare business, yet at this time, these placements are the most sought after.  We have a waiting list of babies and toddlers needing care and not enough spots to accommodate them.

In light of this situation, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of SB487.  This bill would redirect existing tax revenue from the budget reserve to a new non lapsing Early Care and Family Support account.  Funds in this account would then be used to contract with childcare providers, like myself, to increase the supply of high quality infant/toddler care.  This bill would not only give us additional resources to hire qualified teachers for our infant/toddler classrooms, but would essentially help us to keep our doors open for all families.  Thank you.